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Canadian Nationalism

JOHN BOYD

MONTREAL— 1911

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Boyd, John

CANADIAN NATIONALISM

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"O Canada! Terre de nos aieux!"

ROUTHIER.

FOREWORD:

On the evening of Saturday, January 28, 1911, a banquet was held at the Windsor Hotel, Montreal, to commemorate the first anniversary of the founding of " Le Devoir " newspaper. Mr. J. A. Vaillancourt, president of La Publicité, publishers of " Le Devoir," occupied the chair, and there were present nearly 500 guests, including a large number of citizens prominent in Canada's political, professional, financial and commercial life. Speeches were made by Messrs. Henri Bourassa, leader of the Nationalist movement and director of " Le Devoir;" F. D. Monk, M.P.; J. M. Tellier, leader of the Conservative party in Quebec; Hon. Jean Prevost, M.L.A.; Armand Lavergne, M.L.A., G. M. Ducharme, L. P. Deslongchamps, manager of " Le Devoir;" Omer Heroux, editor in chief and others. In response to the toast of " Nos Confrères," Mr. John Boyd delivered a speech in English which is here printed in full at the request of a number of friends.

CANADIAN NATIONALISM.

(A speech delivered at " Le Devoir " dinner, Windsor Hotel, Montreal, Saturday evening, January 28, 1911, by John Boyd.)

MR. CHAIRMAN, MY FRIENDS:—

I am a Canadian—Je suis un Canadien—let that, an echo from the strains of Judge Routhier's noble patriotic song " O Canada " to which we have just listened and which should be an inspiration to all Canadians, be the keynote of the few remarks that I shall make this evening.

Allow me first, Mr. Chairman, to thank those who organized this gathering for their kindness in inviting me to be their guest and for the honor of responding to the toast of " Nos Confrères. "As a newspaper man, proud of my profession and connected for many years with the press of the Dominion, I am one of yourselves. We have all, as neswpaper men, watched with interest the progress of your paper and we congratulate you upon the high position it has achieved within such a brief time and wish you the greatest possible success in the future. Personally I rejoice, as I shall always rejoice, to be present at a gathering of my French Canadian confreres because from them all I have received the most unbounded kindness and my small efforts to promote a better understanding between English speaking and French speaking Canadians, the most sympathetic appreciation for which I would take this opportunity of thanking them all from the bottom of my heart. That is one of the reasons why I am pleased to be here to-night. But there are other reasons. In the first place I am glad to be here because I was told that I should not be here. The narrowness and prejudice of some otherwise very estimable people, Mr. Chairman, is inconceivable. And here it will be necessary to make some personal references; but if I make such references to-night, you will, I hope, understand that it is not in any spirit of egotism but simply because they are necessary as illustrative of my remarks.

Some time ago, Mr. Chairman, I received a letter from my friend Mr. Newton MacTavish, editor of the leading periodical published in the Dominion—the Canadian Magazine of Toronto—asking me to write an article on the Nationalist movement, its aims and objects. In keeping with the high character and absolute independence of that great magazine I was supposed, of course, to make a perfectly fair and impartial presentation of the subject.

Well, sir, I undertook to write the article. My first step was to go to your distinguished chief, Mr. Bourassa, and to frankly ask him what was to be understood by the Nationalist movement, what were its aims and objects, what were his personal views on the situation. Mr. Bourassa as frankly gave me a statement setting forth the aims of the movement and giving his personal views. With that and with the illuminating pamphlet of Mr. Olivar Asselin as a basis I wrote the article which was published in the same number of the magazine that contained a eulogy of the Minister of Marine and a presentation of the Government's naval policy, so that both sides of the question were presented to the Canadian public at the same time. But, would you believe it, sir, that because I had endeavored to be perfectly fair, to present in an impartial and unbiased way the aims of the Nationalist movement as expounded by its leader and prominent representatives, there were some people who upbraided me with presenting in a favorable light what they declared was a dangerous movement, menacing to the peace of the country and our free institutions. It was some of the same people, well meaning and sincere no doubt, but essentially narrow in their views, who when I told them that I had been invited to attend your dinner expressed surprise that I should have accepted an invitation to attend a gathering of such people as Nationalists, in fact frankly told me that I should not be here. Well, gentlemen, I am here and what I shall, with your indulgence, say here to-night briefly but frankly, I shall be ready to repeat before any gathering, French speaking or English speaking, any where. More especially shall I be glad to go before any gathering of English speaking Canadians to defend my French Canadian fellow countrymen against the false and slanderous charges made against them in certain quarters. Nobody could be prouder of

his race and language or more jealous of his rights than I am but I believe in justice; what shall here be said shall not be flattery but the simple truth.

Let there be no misunderstanding as to my position. Permit me to say at the very outset that personally I am proud to be a humble member of that great political party which I believe has done more than any other party for the upbuilding and aggrandizement of the Dominion; of that party under whose administration were inaugurated and carried to successful completion those great public works which have enabled us to achieve the position we hold to-day; of that party under whose auspices and with whose encouragement was begun and successfully completed that great national highway which connected the scattered provinces of the Dominion with a bond of steel from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the Company operating which, despite the predictions of those who declared that it would never pay the axle grease for its wheels, has, thanks to the faith in the future greatness of the Dominion possessed by such men as Lord Strathcona, Lord Mount Stephen, Sir William Van Horne and its present distinguished head Sir Thomas Shaughnessy become one of the greatest corporations in the world, paying ten per cent. per annum to its shareholders and doing so much for the advancement and progress of the Dominion. I am proud to be a humble member of that party which inaugurated that policy—the National policy—which has been and still is the backbone of our industrial life and of our commercial greatness and prosperity. Yes, sir, I am proud to be a humble member of that party which, led at Ottawa by Robert Laird Borden and numbering amongst its leaders in the provinces J. M. Tellier, James Pliny Whitney, John D. Hazen, Richard McBride, R. P. Roblin, F. W. Haultain and C. E. Tanner can also proudly claim as its own such statesmen as John A. Macdonald, George Etienne Cartier, Charles Tupper, Leonard Tilley, Adolphe Chapleau, De Boucherville, L. O. Taillon and he who is with us to-night, a man, who though some may differ with him on certain questions all must respect for having the courage of his convictions and his high personal honor—Frederic Debartzch Monk. Further, gentlemen, I believe that it is because the Conservative party had the direction

of public affairs in this country for so many years and directed them on truly national lines that to-day Canada holds the proud position that it does.

But, sir, whilst I am proud to be a member of the Conservative party, whist I am loyal to its traditions and true to its principles, whilst I hope for its success, I am not so narrow as to believe that any one party possesses a monopoly of patriotism, of honor and of honesty. No, sir, on the contrary, I believe that there are patriotic and honest men in all parties, who desire the greatness and prosperity of their country and who are striving in different ways, according to their lights, to advance its welfare. I know that there are honest and patriotic men in the Conservative party, I believe that there are honest and patriotic men in the Liberal party. I am convinced that there are honest and patriotic men amongst the Nationalists, and even though we may not be able to agree with all their views, surely we can hear what they have to say with a fair and open mind; and if we cannot endorse all the principles they enunciate we can at least endorse those that we think are true and sound and agree to differ with them on the others. I believe, gentlemen, that you are honest and patriotic Canadians and that you desire the welfare of our beloved country even though we may take a different view of certain questions. As I have said elsewhere, fairness, respect for the views of others, even when we are not able to agree with them, not narrowness, illiberality and misrepresentation, are essential. Let us respect the feelings of everybody and let the views of all be heard.

Well, in that spirit, let us candidly ask what is this nationalism which some people profess to dread so much and which some sincerely regard as a menace to the country and to its free institutions.

Let me be perfectly frank. If nationalism meant a campaign for the dominance of any race or creed to the detriment of other races or creeds in the Dominion; if nationalism meant an appeal to racial, religious or sectional prejudice of any kind; if nationalism meant exclusive privileges for any section; if nationalism meant the inculcation and support of any narrow or illiberal ideas then I

do not believe that such nationalism could be countenanced, nay, more, I do not believe that any party with such a platform and proceeding on such lines could ever hope to become an important factor in the political life of this free Dominion. Such nationalism would indeed be a menace to our free institutions and a cause of alarm to all men of good will desiring the welfare of all parts of our Dominion. But if nationalism means, as its distinguished leader has declared, the search for a common ground for all Canadians, the development of all Canadian forces, mental, moral and material; if nationalism means the union of all Canadians, whether French speaking or English speaking, for the upbuilding of our common country and the development of its vast resources; if nationalism means the fullest freedom for all races and for all creeds and respect for the guaranteed rights of all minorities; if nationalism means the honest administration of public affairs and the punishment of betrayers of the public trust; if nationalism means that we should jealously guard the autonomy won for us by the struggles of our forefathers; if nationalism means pride in the name Canadian, the greatness of our country and the glorious destiny that awaits it; if nationalism, I say, means all these, then, sir, I fail to see how the declaration, the support or the triumph of such principles can cause alarm to any patriotic Canadian or be a menace to our free institutions. Such principles may indeed be a menace to the grafters, to betrayers of the public trust, to men who have fattened at the expense of the people, but how can they be a menace to our liberties?

The naval question involving as it does the whole question of our relations to the Mother Country, and other portions of the empire, is a grave question, as to the proper solution of which there is room for difference of opinion. But of one thing, with thousands of other Canadians, I am convinced, that the policy of the present government, which was not submitted as it should have been for the judgment of the people, is no solution; that, at the most, it is another opportunist move, satisfactory neither to those who favor or to those who oppose something being done for naval defence, and serving only to make us the laughing stock of the Mother Country and the other portions of the empire.

Let me add, gentlemen, that it is essential, nay, that it is imperative, if you do not wish to be misunderstood, that your real aims and objects should be made perfectly clear not only in the province of Quebec but in every portion of the Dominion. For there are those ready, in order to serve their own selfish interests, to make of the sacred symbol of our liberties a party ensign. The campaign, as you know, has already begun. A large portion of the English population, whose knowledge of the French Canadians is confined to what they read in certain newspapers, has been taught to distrust your movement. You are charged with being anti-British and disloyal, with aiming to dismember the Dominion, to overthrow British institutions and to make Canada exclusively French Canadian and Roman Catholic, with being fomenters of discord and disunion. Mr. Bourassa has exposed the character of the campaign, and repudiated the charges; it is for you all to show that those charges are false.

Canadian nationalism, sir, as I believe Mr. Bourassa understands it and as I understand it—the nationalism that must appeal to every patriotic Canadian—does not mean the segregation of any particular race or of the adherents of any particular creed but the union of all Canadians, whether English speaking or French speaking, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, for the upbuilding and advancement of our common country. The pioneers of this country, the founders of our commerce and of our industry, our great bankers capitalists and merchants, our great railway men, our captains of industry as well as our statesmen, the workers in every field, producers, cultivators and builders, whose united efforts have made Canada what it is to-day, have all been nationalists in the truest sense of the term. Let us see that the results of their labors shall not be jeopardized, that nothing shall be done to imperil the great heritage that we as Canadians possess. Let our path ever be towards national greatness and righteousness; let our firm determination ever be to uphold our national autonomy and our status as a free people.

With that as the cardinal principle let those desirous of serving their country, let us for a few minutes turn our attention to some of the real dangers that confront us and threaten our domestic peace

and happiness. And if it should be asked by some by what right I presume to speak on these matters I would answer by the right of every Canadian who loves his country, the right of every elector of the Dominion, the right of everyone who has a stake in the country and who is interested in its political, industrial, financial, commercial or agricultural welfare. Time will permit me to refer but very briefly to some of the chief dangers. The first is from without and strikes at our very birthright. A century and a half ago my forefathers and your forefathers, the gallant sons of Britain and of France, met in deadly conflict on the Plains of Abraham. The fates of war decided that one side should be the victors but Providence ordained, and I believe ordained for our mutual benefit and advantage, that the descendants of both victors and vanquished should live side by side in this country and work out its destiny. We have so lived together, we have increased and prospered, and whilst we have our differences as all families have, thanks to the efforts of enlightened and tolerant men amongst the two races we have become a great people with a country of which we all have reason to be proud. But what do we see to-day? We see a foreign element, to a large extent the scum of Europe, pouring into our country by the thousands, lowering the wage value of our working classes and sowing on the free soil of this country the seeds of crime and disease, of irreligion and of the destructive doctrines of revolutionary Europe. If this continues it is only a question of time when we, English speaking and French speaking Canadians, will be at the mercy of the foreign element and when we will have in this country such conditions as now exist in the United States and which threaten that country with revolution and anarchy. Is it not time, sir, that instead of quarreling amongst ourselves and wasting our energies on minor differences we should unite our forces and stand shoulder to shoulder to guard that birthright for which our forefathers fought and died? We shall welcome all people of good will to our broad Dominion but they must understand that freedom is not license and that they must conform to our free institutions and our national ideals.

The enormous influx of Americans into the Canadian west promises to create new difficulties for us. Is the Canadian West, as

Goldwin Smith declared, to be American? Is Canada destined to become in time part of the American Union? We all as patriotic Canadians, I am sure, sincerely hope not. Conditions in Canada, our ideals and our institutions, are far superior to those of the Republic; and patriotic Canadians, whether English speaking or French speaking, will prefer that our Dominion should continue to work out its own destiny until it is in a position to assume its full status in the great sisterhood of nations, linked in the closest amity with all other portions of that great empire of which we form a part. Such an eventuality appeals far more strongly to Canadians than any idea of union with the United States by which we should lose our identity as a people. The fostering of a truly national spirit in all parts of the Dominion, as has been advocated by Mr. Bourassa, will be the surest safeguard against any danger of annexation. The many Canadian clubs that have been formed throughout the Dominion are doing a splendid work in fostering a national spirit, and are worthy of the widest recognition and support.

There is another danger, Mr. Chairman, of a most insidious character. It is that cancer of graft which has assumed such a malignant form in this country within recent years and is eating into the very vitals of the body politic. It has always been the pride and boast of British public life that men were in it to serve the state, but in this country, with that deadly spirit of cynicism and opportunism which has prevailed in recent years, many men seem to be in public life for what there is in it for themselves. As a result we have witnessed the disgraceful exploitation of the public domain for the benefit of party heelers; we have seen men springing from poverty into opulence; we have witnessed the betrayal of the people's interests and been shocked by scandal after scandal. If such conditions are not checked, if the cancer is not cut out at the very root, it will be fatal to our institutions; and I marvel at those who profess to be so alarmed over nationalism being so seemingly indifferent to this deadly danger that menaces us. But despite much public indifference, despite the strength of the evil, I believe that the heart of the people is still sound and that when the time comes they will rise in their indignation, as they have

risen before, and punish the wrongdoers, and their abettors as they deserve to be punished. The handwriting is on the wall, the signs of the times all point to an awakening of the public conscience. Why is it, Mr. Chairman, that whenever Mr. Bourassa appears in public he is acclaimed by the enthusiastic plaudits of thousands of his compatriots? It is not alone the power of his oratory, incomparable as that is; it is not alone the charm of his personality. There is a deeper reason for it. It is, sir, because the people know that he is an honest man, that he places principles above self-interest; and that whilst, if he had been so minded, he might have enjoyed the sweets of office and even have had a fat bank account to his credit, he has remained poor, he has been true to his principles, he is sincere in his convictions and faithful to the people's interests. Why is it, sir, that Mr. Monk is held in such high esteem even by those who do not agree with him on all questions? It is, sir, because he is known to be honest, because he has the courage of his convictions, because he has shown that he is prepared to face contumely, misrepresentation, and even defeat, rather than to swerve one iota from what he believes to be right. Such conduct, so rare to-day amongst our public men, must evoke the respect of all. Yes, Mr. Bourassa; yes, Mr. Monk, continue the great work that you have begun, rally your countrymen to high ideals of patriotism, honor and honesty; and whilst men may differ with you on some questions they shall all respect you and history shall do you justice, writing your names in letters of gold on the honor roll of our beloved country.

The third and last danger to which I would refer is that spirit of intolerance, the racial and other prejudices which excite bad blood between the different elements in this country. Happily that evil has shown signs of diminishing with our growth as a people but it still breaks out at times. Some of the misunderstanding is due to fanaticism, much of it, I believe, is simply the result of ignorance. There are fanatics on both sides. There are people in Quebec who have no use for "*les Anglais*" and by whose utterances many English-speaking Canadians very wrongly and unjustly judge all French Canadians. There are people in the English provinces who think that this country would be much better if there

were no French Canadians in it at all. But, thank God, sir, the future of this country does not depend upon such narrow-minded people but upon the broad, tolerant and enlightened people of both races.

Providence, as I have said, gentlemen, ordained that we English-speaking Canadians and you French-speaking Canadians should live side by side in this country and work out together its destiny. We can only do so as brethren and friends, not as foes and antagonists. It becomes the duty, therefore, of every patriotic Canadian who desires the welfare of his country to combat this spirit of intolerance whenever it manifests itself. Why, sir, it was only recently that I read the report of a speech delivered in the city of Toronto where the speaker was reported to have declared that the real object of the French-Canadians was the dismemberment of the Dominion and that they were disloyal to Britain. Born, sir, in the city of Montreal, living here all my life, coming into frequent contact with the leaders of French-Canadian life and thought as well as with the masses of the people, numbering amongst my best and dearest friends French-Canadians, I would repel that statement with all the emphasis at my command. The French-Canadians disloyal!! Have those who make such a charge forgotten the lessons of history? Do they not remember that only a few years after the cession, when the French-Canadians were still smarting from defeat, the emissaries of the American Congress, who were sent to try and induce them to rise against the British Crown and to throw in their lot with the rebel colonies, were spurned and their insidious proposals rejected with scorn; that the clergy and seigneurs were proof against the disloyal overtures made to them; that in fact, as Garneau truly remarks, it was to the Roman Catholic clergy and seigneurs of Quebec at this juncture that Great Britain was indebted for the conservation of the dependency now her greatest possession. The French-Canadians disloyal!! Do they who make such a charge, sir, forget that glorious page of our country's history which tells how one hundred years ago the American horde under Hampton, sweeping down on our country and confidently expecting to capture it, was met, defeated and driven from our soil by a handful of Canadians ten

times their inferior in strength. And who were those who on the battlefield of Chateauguay saved Canada for the British Crown and the British Empire? Who were the heroes of that momentous day? Who were De Salaberry, the Duchesnays, Longtin, Lamothe, Debartzch, Lévesque, L'Ecuyer, Guy, Bruyère, Schiller and Huneau? French-Canadians every man of them! Nor shall we forget the meed of praise due to Macdonnell and his brave Scots, to the gallant Daly, to Ferguson and others who stood shoulder to shoulder with the French-Canadians and shared in the honors of that glorious day. The loyalty of the French-Canadians needs no vindication to those who have read history aright but it seems that there are some people still ignorant of the record.

Anti-British!! Who, sir, that has read British history or studied the careers of its great men, heroes, statesmen and reformers, martyrs for civil and religious liberty, the foes of special privilege and champions of freedom, can fail, whether he be of British, French or any other blood, to admire that great empire and to love that flag which is the symbol of justice and liberty! But whilst the French-Canadians have shown their loyalty to the British flag and if circumstances arose would show it again, do not let us be so narrow as to forget, I would say to my English-speaking fellow-countrymen, that blood is thicker than water; and whilst we are proud, as we have a right to be, of our British descent, in the veins of the French-Canadians flows the blood of those gallant sons of France who won this country for civilization and Christianity; and if they failed to hold in regard the land from which their forefathers came, that great land of France, which has done so much for human progress and thought and whose artistic and intellectual triumphs are the admiration of the whole civilized world; if they failed to cherish the language learned as children from their mother's lips or to be true to the faith of their fathers, they would be recreants and cowards unworthy of our respect. But whilst we are proud of our British descent, as we have a right to be, whilst you are proud of your French descent, as you have a right to be, the interests of our own country must always be of paramount importance and have the first consideration from all of us.

Nor should English-speaking Canadians forget that not alone in statesmanship, in finance and in industry, but also in art and in literature which constitute the soul and genius of a people, has great work been done by French Canadians. The names of Garneau, Crémazie, Fréchette, Chauveau, De Gaspé, Gérin-Lajoie, Casgrain, Nelligan, Routhier, Lavallée, Philippe Hébert, Albani, Suzor Côté, Laliberté, Bourassa, Chapman, Lozeau, Beauchemin, LeMay, Sulte, David, Chapais, Poisson, Dionne, Gagnon, LeMoine, Roy and many others reflect honor not only on the province of Quebec, but on the whole Dominion, and their works are a priceless heritage. All honor also to those ardent and patriotic young French Canadians who to-day, in the face of much apathy and discouragement, are devoting their genius and efforts to the achievement of high ideals in art and literature.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I recently read an article in which the writer, a man of education, instructor in Canadian constitutional history in one of our leading educational establishments, declared that whilst the Nationalists have discarded some of the anti-clerical and radical principles of the Parti Rouge they are one with both the Patriotes and the Rouges in presenting an irreconcilable front to British connection and in dreaming of a French-Canadian nation on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Where is the responsible French-Canadian public man who would uphold such a pretension? Where is anything of the kind to be found in any of the utterances of Mr. Bourassa? I do not need your assurances that it is not so but it is regrettable that such statements should be given circulation by men who, no doubt, are sincere but who do not understand the French-Canadians. It simply serves to show the misunderstanding that exists and which we should all strive as patriotic Canadians to remove.

Such, sir, are some of the real dangers that menace us as a people. And has the time not come when it behoves all patriotic Canadians, whether they be Conservatives, Liberals or Nationalists, to unite to combat these dangers and to bring about a better state of affairs in this country, when sinking our minor differences it should be, to paraphrase a well known line, that

"None are for a party but all are for the state."

And now, gentlemen, I shall close. Events are moving swiftly in these days and the next few years promise to witness momentous developments in our political life. Let us meet them with dignity and manliness as free people, jealous of our rights and conscious of our responsibilities so that when the time comes for us to quit the scene we may all be able, though we may have made some mistakes, to say, as the great Papineau was able to say, at the close of his career: "I at least have loved my country, I have loved her wisely, I have loved her madly." In the palmy days of Rome the proudest boast of every Roman was "Civis Romanus sum." So let it be with us. Let our watchword be the noble device of our own beloved city "Concordia Salus." Let our proudest boast be, not that we are English-Canadians, French-Canadians, Scotch or Irish Canadians, but that we are all Canadians, proud of our great Dominion and confident of its glorious future:

Let others in their emblems see
The signs of pomp and glory,
The Maple Leaf our emblem be—
Canadians All!

The past is theirs, the future ours
And great shall be its story,
Most puissant be this people's powers
Canadians All!

The future calls to greater fame
To our fair land redounding,
One land for brethren one in name—
Canadians All!

CANADIANS ALL.

Upon each day of all our days,
What message shall we hear?
What rallying cry our voices raise?
Canadians All!

In distant days did heroes bold
The sure foundations rear,
Who were those mighty ones of old?
Canadians All!

The pioneer who blazed the way,
The priest who taught the savage,
The warriors brave, in proud array,
Canadians All!

And when the cause of valiant France
Succumbed to warfare's ravage
Her sons arose with dauntless glance,
Canadians All!

Sprung from the soil, proud of their past
And of its glorious pages,
They've always been from first to last,
Canadians All!

The Englishmen brought their virile power.
The heirs of mighty ages,
To our fair country gave the dower,
Canadians All!

And Scots have written large the name
Upon our country's annals,
How great their work, how high their fame,
Canadians All!

And Irishmen, whose fiery zeal
Hath broken through all trammels,
Whose genius hath affixed its seal,
Canadians All!

And men of every race and clime
Shall be heirs to our future,
Shall too become in course of time,
Canadians All!

And one and all, joined hand in hand,
Shall guard the mighty structure,
Shall make the future far more grand,
Canadians All!

Let others in their emblems see
The signs of pomp and glory,
The Maple Leaf our emblem be—
Canadians All!

The past is theirs, the future ours
And great shall be its story,
Most puissant be this people's powers
Canadians All!

Who says the time is past to talk
Of Canada for Canadians?
Shall we our future greatness balk?
Canadians All!

Nay, far from that, but rather say,
As one our voices sounding,—
" We hail the name upon each day,
Canadians All! "

The future calls to greater fame
To our fair land redounding,
One land for brethren, one in name—
Canadians All!

JOHN BOYD.